

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 440 - Platinum Reward Card

After this message, Jake's vision shifted and the Village disappeared as well, replaced by a dark room filled with runes. These runes slowly revolved around various piles of cards and he soon realized that the only usable items in this place were his own Fluid Card and the other Cards and Game Items in his possession. His machete, backpack and supplies were nowhere in sight.

There were 5 piles of Cards and each one was made out of a different material. From left to right, it was Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum and Diamond. Exactly the same system used for Titles and Glyphs during his Second Ordeal.

When nothing happened, Jake checked his Fluid Card and found that the Reward section that was usually grayed out was now highlighted. With nothing better to do, he clicked on it.

At once, the familiar robotic voice buzzed in his head.

[Participant Jake Wilderth: Point calculation...]

[4 Active Roles, 1 Unique Legendary Role, 2 lvl2 Roles, 1 lvl1 Role...]

[Accumulated Fluid: 312 469 215 units]

[Reputation Points: 69]

[Number of Monsters eliminated: 4]

[Other achievements...]

[Calculation complete. Determining the reward... Platinum Reward.]

At that moment, the second stack of cards from the right floated toward him and the radiance enveloping it disappeared, allowing him to draw a card. Without Jake having to draw anything, the card at the top of the pile flew to him and merged with his Fluid Card.

As soon as the Platinum Card touched his Fluid Card, he knew exactly what the reward consisted of:

[Platinum Reward Card: Using it converts a Role of your choice into a permanent Title, otherwise known as a Soul Glyph.]

Jake's eyes almost popped out as he read the description. Boy, that was quite a payoff! The news was so surreal and unexpected that he found it hard to accept. He thought that this Ordeal would be shitty till the end, but it seemed that it wouldn't be.

At least now, even if he failed his Main Mission, the Glyph alone would guarantee that he hadn't wasted all his efforts.

Of course, he had no intention of using this Card now. Unfortunately, now that he knew the rewards were worth it, his original plan to escape the Purgatory had taken a serious hit.

Hal ezuut, jvahn vft guur iware tmzqfro fii oval oaqu, cahcut ar gftiw, frt dmz f gzaud arlofro msuzlvftmjut usuzwovare uilu.

Gzuut+Rujfztl+Cmzzpnoamr. Tvu nuzduho hmqgm om urlpzu val tueuruzfhw.

Jake forced himself to breathe in deeply to get rid of those pesky thoughts, but even after several minutes it dawned on him that it was hopeless. The carrot was too good to ignore.

‘Sorry Xi. I’ll continue to be selfish a little longer. If I run away without giving it my best shot, I might blame myself for the rest of my life. ‘

His Oracle AI sighed softly, but she didn’t try to stop him. As soon as she had learned about the contents of the Platinum Reward Card, she had known that nothing would change his mind.

[Just promise me one thing.] She coerced him to pledge. [Don’t let the lure of money keep you from seeing what truly matters. If your life is in danger, then run.]

Jake vowed not to do anything foolish, but Xi heaved a weary sigh upon hearing his empty words. She had made her point, and that was all that mattered.

Once he got his reward, the stack of Platinum Cards reunited with the other stacks and a few seconds later the scenery changed again and the stacks disappeared. When his vision stabilized again he was back in a Village.

[You are joining the playing field of the Second Round. Do you wish to change your initial Role of Forest Warden? If so, you will lose your current Initial Role and be allowed to draw a new Role Card.]

Jake declined outright. Once his answer was confirmed, he was finally allowed to focus on his new surroundings.

Jake looked around vigilantly, but he had to concede that the cobblestone road and the stone houses looked exactly like the Village he had just left. If the names on the house signs weren’t different, he might have thought he had returned to the Village of the First Round.

Yuo, fdouz mriw f duj lounl vu cruj ovfo oval Vaiifeu jfl tudaraouiw rmo ovu lfqu.

‘My Lord!’

Jake froze in place as he saw a group of riders in chainmail gallop in, then jump off their horses unannounced to kneel before him. He was so taken aback that he tried to draw his machete in a hurry before remembering that he no longer had his belongings on him.

‘My Lord?’ The middle-aged man kneeling at the front of the squad repeated patiently as he continued to stare at the pavement.

The soldier’s prodding put an end to his ramblings. He didn’t need to make things clear for now. Just accept the situation as it was.

Was this soldier treating him as his Lord? So be it.

‘What is the situation?’ He asked with his newfound coolness.

‘To be honest, the situation is not good My Lord...’ The officer gave a wry smile. ‘Without you to lead us, the Monsters are rampant and our relationship with the other Villages is rather tense at the moment. At this rate, there won’t be any villagers left soon.’

Jake looked again at the houses nearby, more attentively this time, and found that indeed most of the signs had no names on them. About one out of every two houses was unoccupied.

‘How many Villagers does the Village currently have?’ Jake got right to the point.

Tvu Gpfzt nzuourtut om hmpro jaov val dareuzl frt frljuzut,

‘27, My Lord. No! 28, 29, 36, 41? What the hell is going on?’

Jake got to watch an NPC bugging out live before his eyes. If he wasn’t sure if these guys were Players or natives when they first showed up, at least now there was no doubt.

After a few moments of bugging, the guard's response stabilized.

'26 Guards, 6 Domestics and 46 Villagers My Lord. '

'Good. Take me to my residence. ' Jake ordered calmly. 'No need to kneel in my presence in the future. '

'Ye, yes My Lord. Follow me. '

A saddled black stallion was brought to him by a smiling guard and to put on a proper show, Jake had to hop on and act like an experienced rider.

A hint, he wasn't.

As soon as he took the reins in hand, the horse reared up and tried to buck him off with all its might. With his strength, Jake had no trouble restraining it, but to get it to move forward he had to heel it so hard that he broke a few of the poor stallion's ribs. After this thrashing, his unruly mount proved to be much more docile.

Jake had learned to ride as a child and although he was not an expert he had the basics. With his horse's temper, he couldn't help but suspect that the Guards were setting him up. Though from their approving expressions, there was probably nothing wrong with it.

With his intelligence and agility, it only took a few minutes for Jake to go from clumsy to a flawless rider. He expected the Guards to lead him back to the forest where his old home was located, but he was caught off guard when they headed for the fortress in the center of the Village.

When they stopped in front of the drawbridge of a modest moated castle, but still 50 times larger than his old home, Jake found himself unable to suppress his disbelief.

'I live here ?'

The gate guards freaked out, as they thought he was discontent with the place.

‘What’s wrong, my lord?’ One of them stuttered as he bowed. ‘We can fix that, if you tell us what you want.’

Jake studied their expressions for a moment before shaking his head.

‘It’s okay. Just leave me alone for now. I’ll have you summoned if I need you.’

Once the drawbridge was lowered, he entered a small, well-kept courtyard that included a small stable as well as a training ground and a small barracks for the castle Guards. As soon as she saw him, a maid scurried over to offer her services, but he declined.

Instead, he immediately dismissed all the staff. When the drawbridge was pulled up behind him, Jake finally heaved a big sigh of relief.

‘Finally, peace and quiet.’ He muttered in a low voice.

For the next fifteen minutes, he set about visiting every room in his new home. The entrance gate was a double door, with wings so high that they were twice his size.

All in all, everything had been thought of in a big way. The bedroom alone was larger than his former home of Forest Warden, while the dining room was large enough to host banquets for several hundred people. If he wished, he could invite the entire Village to eat.

The furniture was also exquisite, provided you liked the medieval style of the time, while the walls and floor were covered with rugs and tapestry. There were even a few works of art in the form of paintings and sculptures that would not have been out of place in a museum.

Most of the tapestries and draperies were elaborately woven around the edges, but the inside was almost always monochromatic, as if they were waiting for someone to add a coat of arms.

In addition to all this ostentatious opulence, as with any self-respecting Lord, a comfortable throne sat at the end of the main hall where he was supposed to receive complaints from the Villagers and other reports from his subjects.

Jake also found the dungeons as well as an armory where he found his previous equipment as he continued his exploration, which answered one of the unanswered questions he had been wondering about for a while, that is, what the 'Prison Break' card was for.

As he climbed the stairs to the top floor, he was able to access the balcony of the highest tower and an unobstructed view of the surrounding landscape unfolded before his eyes.